

Sept. 5, 2018

The Honorable Dr. Hank Vaupel  
Chairman  
Michigan State House Health Policy Committee  
N-896 House Office Building  
P.O. Box 30014

Lansing MI 48909

Dear Chairman Vaupel:

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 5857, sponsored by Rep. Joe Bellino. This legislation will modernize Michigan's nearly 50-year-old prescription vial standards by requiring opioids and other Schedule II drugs be dispensed in locking prescription vials. These vials will significantly reduce pilfering, save lives and save millions of dollars in excess health care costs to the State.

As a registered pharmacist with a doctorate degree, college professor, and Director of the **Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention**, I am well aware of the impact this epidemic is having on communities across the nation. This is a complex issue and public health officials and countless other stakeholders have offered solutions to address one or another of the many layers involved. This bill, however is designed to reduce pilfering and prevent Michigan's youth and teens from ever starting the cycle of misuse in the first place.

While it is no secret that today's youth and teenagers are experimenting and using prescription drugs recreationally, it is not widely known that most youth and teen misuse starts in the family medicine cabinet, not on a street corner.

Pilfering, which is sneaking a small number of pills hoping it goes undetected, is the leading source of youth and teen opioid misuse. Each year, nearly 1 million youth nationwide between the ages of 12 and 17 initiate prescription drug misuse, and many begin experimenting in middle school. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency's 2015 National Drug Threat Assessment revealed that nearly 80 percent of eventual heroin addicts started by using prescription opioids.

Originally designed in 1970 to prevent children age 5 and younger from accessing flavored baby aspirin, the child-resistant prescription vials currently in use are outdated and highly ineffective at preventing pilfering. Today's pain medications are nearly 80 times stronger than morphine, yet they are still being dispensed in child-resistant prescription vials.

Both Federal regulatory agencies like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and nationally recognized centers such as the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health have long called for the packaging used to dispense these highly addictive drugs to be modernized. These low-cost secure locking

prescription vials will have a tremendous impact by reducing pilfering and ensuring these highly addictive medications are only accessible to those who need them.

Over a 10-year-period, this bill is expected to prevent more than 150,000 Michigan youth from initiating misuse, save more than \$1 billion in health care costs and return \$715 million in lost productivity and criminal justice costs to the state's economy.

Requiring locking prescription vials is a step in the right direction to stem the tide of this epidemic that is impacting families across our state and nation. I urge the Health Policy Committee to pass House Bill 5857. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert J. Valuck". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Valuck" clearly distinguishable.

Robert J. Valuck, Ph.D., R Ph.

Departments of Clinical Pharmacy, Epidemiology, and Family Medicine  
University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus  
Director, Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

CC:

- Representative Jim Tedder
- Representative Joseph Graves
- Representative Daniela Garcia
- Representative Jason Sheppard
- Representative Julie Calley
- Representative Diana Farrington
- Representative Roger Hauck
- Representative Pamela Hornberger
- Representative Bronna Kahle
- Representative Jeff Noble
- Representative Winnie Brinks
- Representative LaTanya Garrett
- Representative Sheldon Neeley
- Representative Jim Ellison
- Representative Abdullah Hammoud
- Representative Kevin Hertel